

Message Text

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41

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 PM-04 INR-07 SSO-00 OES-06 L-03

EB-07 SP-02 /055 W

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R 071207Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7005

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 9982

STADIS//////////

FOLLOWING REPEAT BOMBAY 1731 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI
7 JULY 1976.

QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOMBAY 1731

FOR DCM

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH ENGR IN

SUBJ: DAE SEPARATION PLANT PLANS

REF: NEW DELHI 9093

1. IN PAST TWO WEEKS SETHNA HAS TWICE MAINTAINED THAT ALL DATA FOR PRESS STORIES CITED REFTEL WERE DERIVED FROM PUBLIC REPORTS FROM THE DAE. WHEN CONGEN FIRST MENTIONED THESE STORIES TO HIM IN LATE JUNE, HE SAID THAT THE INFORMATION WAS ALL CONTAINED IN THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY, BUT ONE HAD TO DO SOME RESEARCH FROM THE LAST FIVE OR SIX REPORTS TO GET THE TYPE OF CONCLUSIONS REACHED IN THE PRESS ACCOUNTS. HE ADMITTED THAT THE REPORTERS HAD CLEARLY BEEN HELPED IN THEIR RESEARCH BY HIS PEOPLE WHO HAD INSPIRED THESE STORIES. HE GAVE CONGEN A FEW CITATIONS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORTS WHICH, AFTER CHECKING PROVED INSUFFICIENT FOR RECONSTRUCTING THE PRESS ACCOUNTS. ON JULY 1ST,
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CONGEN AGAIN TOLD SETHNA THAT IT WAS UNABLE TO FIND SUFFICIENT

MATERIAL IN THESE REPORTS TO GET THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESS STORIES. SETHNA THEN SAID THAT THE RESEARCH SHOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED BY AN EXAMINATION OF THE LATEST GOI PUBLICATION ENTITLED PERFORMANCE BUDGET OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY 1976-77.

2. PERFORMANCE BUDGET DOCUMENT DOES INDEED EXPLICITLY MENTION THE MAJOR POINTS IN THE PRESS STORIES. FOR EXAMPLE ON PAGE 7, THE REPORT NOTES THAT AMONG SPECIAL SCHEMES BEING UNDERTAKEN DURING THE FIFTH PLAN ARE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROCESS FOR PRODUCTION OF URANIUM HEXAFLUORIDE, ITS ISOTOPE SEPARATION AND OTHER PILOT PLANT STUDIES. RELATED TEXT NOTES THAT RESEARCH IS GOING ON GASEOUS DIFFUSION, CENTRIFUGE AND LASER TECHNIQUES FOR PRODUCING ENRICHED URANIUM. THE PERFORMANCE BUDGET ALSO MENTIONS ON PAGE 9 THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FUEL REPROCESSING PLANT AT KALPAKKAM. SETHNA SAYS THAT THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE DAE STARTING FROM THREE YEARS AGO MAKE CLEAR THAT THIS ACTIVITY HAS BEEN IN PROGRESS AND THAT IT IS A NECESSARY ONE TO DEAL WITH THE WASTE PROBLEM AND TO INSURE MAXIMUM UTILIZATION OF INDIA'S URANIUM.

3. SETHNA CONFIRMED THAT ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES IN THE PRESS STORIES EXCEPT THE FUEL REPROCESSING PLANT AT KALPAKKAM ARE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES WITH NO EARLY PLANS FOR MOVEMENT TO THE PRODUCTION STAGE. THE EMPHASIS ON THESE ACTIVITIES AT THIS TIME IN PRESS STORIES IS DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT WORK IS GOING ON SO THAT INDIA WOULD BE PREPARED TO DO SOME OF THE THINGS ITSELF THAT IT'S NOW ACQUIRING ABROAD. HE ADMITTED THAT HIS WORK ON URANIUM HEXAFLUORIDE OFFERS NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO UNITED STATES SUPPLIES OF ENRICHED URANIUM FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS AT BEST. MOREOVER, HE STRESSED THAT THE BILATERAL AGREEMENT REQUIRES THAT INDIA PURCHASE ITS ENRICHED URANIUM FOR ITS ONLY PLANT REQUIRING SUCH FUEL FROM THE UNITED STATES. CONSEQUENTLY, HE HAD NOT WANTED TO PUBLICIZE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES THAT COULD GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS CONTEMPLATING ANYTHING THAT WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE BILATERAL AGREEMENT. PUBLICATION WAS ONLY UNDERTAKEN WHEN THERE APPEARED TO BE A REAL DANGER OF INTERRUPTION IN THE SUPPLY OF MATERIAL FROM THE UNITED STATES AND THE INDIAN PUBLIC HAD TO BE INFORMED THAT ITS GOVERNMENT WAS EXAMINING ALTERNATIVES. CONGEN DOES NOT HAVE THE EXPERTISE FOR THE CLOSE ANALYSIS OF THESE DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO DETERMINE WHETHER SETHNA IS BASICALLY CORRECT IN HIS ASSERTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH GOING ON AT TROMBAY. CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MATERIAL IS SIMPLY TOO TECHNICAL FOR OUR LIMITED EXPERTISE. SHOULD EMBASSY HAVE ANY DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING COPIES OF THE PERFORMANCE BUDGET OF THE DAE, WE WILL BE GLAD TO LOAN OURS. COURTNEY

UNQUOTE.
SAXBE

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DOCUMENTS, RESEARCH, URANIUM, NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE09982
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760261-0923
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760784/aaaacvqq.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 76 NEW DELHI 9093
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <05 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DAE SEPARATION PLANT PLANS
TAGS: TECH, ENRG, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006